



Bureau of Land Management 2300 River Frontage Road • Silt, Colorado 81652

BLM COLORADO RIVER VALLEY NEWS

NEW RELEASE

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BLM Colorado Launches Public Scoping and Environmental Analysis on Existing Oil and Gas Leases in the White River National Forest

25 Lease Suspensions Extended in Thompson Divide

SILT, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Colorado River Valley Field Office today announced that it is beginning a 30-day public scoping period as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze 65 existing oil and gas leases on the White River National Forest. The BLM is initiating an EIS to address National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) deficiencies identified by the Interior Board of Land Appeals for the 65 existing leases.

A “scoping period” gives the public a chance to tell the BLM what issues and concerns they think should be addressed in an EIS before the BLM begins drafting the document.

“Scoping comments that are specific to this area and these existing leases will be the most effective as we draft the alternatives we will analyze in the EIS,” said BLM Colorado River Valley Field Office Manager Steve Bennett. “Public involvement is a critical piece of this analysis and we will consider a wide range of alternatives, which will be made available for public review and comment when drafted.”

The BLM expects to release a draft of the EIS and alternatives for public review in early 2015. As a result of this EIS, the BLM could cancel the existing leases, modify the terms and conditions of the leases, or keep the existing terms and conditions of leases in place. The existing leases are entirely on land managed by the White River National Forest.

The BLM is conducting this EIS to address deficiencies in the existing environmental analyses for these leases. While the U.S. Forest Service determines which of its lands are available for oil and gas leasing and had the lead on the environmental analysis for those decisions, the BLM must either formally adopt the Forest Service analysis or perform its own analysis. The BLM did not formally adopt the Forest Service analysis and is performing its own analysis of these 65 leases through this EIS.

The BLM has also extended the lease suspensions through April 1, 2016, for 18 leases held by SG Interests and seven held by Ursa Resources Group in the Thompson Divide area west of Carbondale because these leases are included in the EIS. Both companies have pending development proposals that will not be analyzed by the Forest Service and BLM until this EIS is completed. Continuing the suspension of the leases prevents any development activity and pauses the 10-year deadline leaseholders have to begin developing their leases.

One of the circumstances in which a lease suspension is normally warranted occurs when the leaseholder is awaiting a decision from the BLM or other surface management agency, such as this EIS. Additionally, both SG Interests and Ursa have pending development and unitization proposals. The first development proposal for the Ursa leases was submitted in 2009, followed by a request to unitize its seven leases in 2012. SG Interests first submitted a proposal to unitize its leases in 2011, followed by development proposals in 2012. The BLM and the U.S. Forest Service will not take action on the development proposals for these leases until this EIS is complete.

The EIS allows for a robust public involvement process, which begins with the scoping period announced today. Public meetings to answer questions and accept written public comment will be scheduled.

Additional information about the EIS scoping period is available at:
<http://www.blm.gov/co/crvfo>.

Scoping comments need to be received by May 6, 2014 and may be emailed to WRNFleases@blm.gov; faxed to 970-876-9090; or mailed to Bureau of Land Management, Colorado River Valley Field Office, 2300 River Frontage Road, Silt, CO 81652.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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